



# Co-developed multicultural emergency resource hub with community partners

**Burnet Institute, Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria and  
Today Design**

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## Background

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### **Emergencies**

Emergencies are events which endanger or threaten to endanger life, property of the environment [1]. Examples in Australia include fires, floods, storms, earthquakes and disease outbreaks [2]. Emergencies have negative impacts on people's mental and physical health, financial situation, housing and employment [3]. To reduce the negative impacts of emergencies, effective communication is critical [4].

### **Emergency Communication**

Emergency communication refers to how we share information before, during and after an emergency [5]. Multiple stakeholders can share emergency information including government departments, media outlets, emergency service providers, community organisations and members of the public [6]. Before an emergency, effective communication can provide information so communities are able to make informed decisions, take life-saving actions and reduce the impacts of an emergency [7]. Emergency communication needs to be trusted by the community so people feel empowered to protect themselves, their families and communities [8].

### **Multicultural communities**

Evidence suggests that multicultural communities face barriers to accessing emergency information [9]. In 2021, 28% of people in Australia reported they were born overseas and 23% reported using a language other than English at home [10]. Emergency communication with multicultural communities is critical as newly-arrived groups may have limited experience and understanding of local hazards in Australia [11]. During the COVID-19 pandemic and recent bushfires and floods in Victoria, multicultural communities shared their experiences with emergency communication. Common problems included limited availability of resources in languages other than English, complex language, poorly translated information and limited use of culturally-appropriate platforms [9, 12, 13]. These problems make it more difficult for multicultural communities to prepare and respond to emergencies, placing them at risk of elevated harms.

### **Our aim**

We aimed to support more equitable outcomes in emergencies by:

- Exploring the emergency communication preferences of multicultural community members in regional Victoria
- Collaborating with multicultural organisations and communities to co-design emergency communication resources



## Methods

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### **Larger program of work**

This work was part of a larger 2-year program that aimed to support multicultural communities to prepare, respond and recover from emergencies [14]. This program was funded by Emergency Recovery Victoria and involved a partnership between the Burnet Institute, Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria, LanguageLoop, Neighbourhood Collective Australia and Today Design. This report focuses on a research project led by the Burnet Institute.

### **Research team**

Our team included researchers from Burnet Institute's Implementation Science working group. Our team have experience collaborating with community organisations, facilitating workshops and creating products with diverse multicultural communities.

### **A participatory approach**

Participatory research involves working collaboratively to develop a study that explores a topic of importance to the community and takes action to create social change [15]. Participatory research is flexible and iterative meaning that projects are shaped by local community input [16].

### **Scoping phase**

Based on early discussions with key stakeholders, we learnt that regional ethnic councils and multicultural associations were leading emergency communication efforts with multicultural communities. We heard that community leaders and volunteers often did this work with limited resources. As a result, we aimed to partner with a state peak body for migrant and refugee communities, to support and build on their existing work.

### **Study partners**

We partnered with Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria [14] and Today Design, a design and innovation studio [17]. We held regular weekly meetings to shape the research, interpret findings and create study outputs. We discussed ECCV's body of work in emergencies, their hopes and fears for this project and opportunities to work together. We learned that ECCV was interested in an online platform to share information with ethnic councils and offer a channel for councils and community partners to collaborate and share resources and experiences. The project's hopes included creating a sustainable platform and strengthening connections with community partners. Concerns included limited funding for implementation, sustainability challenges, and the risk of over-consulting councils and community partners. The main opportunity identified for our research was to collaborate with ethnic councils based on existing work, avoiding duplication, and developing an online platform that truly served their needs and reflected their priorities. Building on these insights, we adapted our study and leveraged an existing pilot digital platform, VOICE Online, to better understand what type of online platform would be most beneficial for ethnic councils and multicultural community workers.

ECCV also connected Burnet's research team with the Multicultural Emergency Management Partnership (MEMP) [18], a network of multicultural community leaders, emergency management



agencies, and supportive organisations working to enhance community safety and resilience during emergencies[18] The research team attended MEMP meetings to understand sector priorities and inform the project's direction.

## **Participants**

Participants were recruited through networks of ECCV and the MEMP. Those who were interested in the research expressed their interest via email and were followed up by a member of the research team for more information. Participants needed experience working or volunteering with multicultural communities in Victoria's emergency services.

## **Project activities**

We conducted a range of activities to shape the direction of the project (see Table 1). In August 2024 we held an online scoping workshop to understand how we might improve emergency communication with multicultural community stakeholders. Individuals who could not attend the workshop were invited to complete an online interview to share their perceptions. Following our scoping phase, we generated different product ideas to further explore. These ideas were discussed in partner meetings with ECCV to determine what product might be useful for the sector. The potential product was then shared with stakeholders through online interviews to gather their early perceptions. Next, we invited participants to attend an online design workshop to provide further input on what features and functions the product should provide. Finally, we worked with Today Design to create a prototype of the product and invited stakeholders to test and share their feedback to refine the design.

**Table 1. Project activities**

Aim	Methods	Activities and questions
<p><b>Workshop 1</b></p> <p>Explore how we might improve multicultural emergency communications in regional Victoria</p>	<p>90-minute online scoping workshop via Zoom [19] and 60-minute online interviews via Zoom [20] with multicultural community workers, leaders and community members.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome and introductions</li> <li>• Project Aim</li> <li>• Participants divided into two break out rooms</li> <li>• Group one explored               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What communication resources are available for multicultural communities to prepare for emergencies in regional Victoria?</li> <li>○ What communication resources are missing to help multicultural communities prepare for emergencies in regional Victoria</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Group two explored               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What has already been done to better include multicultural communities in emergency communications in regional Victoria?</li> <li>○ What still needs to be done to better include multicultural communities in emergency communications in regional Victoria?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Participants brought back in larger group to share what they learnt</li> <li>• During interviews, participants were asked similar questions</li> </ul>
<p><b>Interviews</b></p> <p>Explore early perceptions of potential product to improve emergency communications</p>	<p>60-minute online stakeholder interviews via Zoom (n=4) with bicultural workers and regional ethnic council representatives. We shared an example of a current website to understand</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome and introductions</li> <li>• Current experience with emergency communication</li> <li>• Key questions included:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How do you feel about creating a profile on a website?</li> <li>○ What do you think about sharing resources online?</li> <li>○ What would you like an online platform to do?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



	whether it may be a useful product for emergency communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What would you add or remove from this example?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Workshop 2</b></p> <p>Understand what features and functions would make a product accessible and usable</p>	<p>90-minute online Zoom workshop (n=5) with representatives from ECCV, regional ethnic councils and design team. We used a Zoom board to create activity templates for participants to complete.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Welcome and introductions</li> <li>● Resource journey map <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Participants listed the key words they would use to identify emergency communication resources</li> <li>○ Participants were told their search had returned too many results and were asked what filters they would use to narrow their search</li> <li>○ Participants were also asked how they would like results to be sorted – prioritising options from most to least useful</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Description of resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Participants were shown an example of what information could appear in their search results</li> <li>○ Participants noted what was helpful and less helpful</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Using and sharing resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Participants were told they had now found a resource</li> <li>○ They were asked what kind of information and features they would like to see included on the resource page</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Testing meeting</b></p> <p>Develop and test a prototype with end users</p>	<p>45-minute online meeting with ECCV staff and regional ethnic council representatives (n=6). Meeting was facilitated by Today Design with support from Burnet staff. End users were then invited to review the prototype and complete 1-2 hours of testing in their own time.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● User testing tasks included checking: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Accessibility of specific pages</li> <li>○ Key features were working</li> <li>○ Pages were easy to navigate</li> <li>○ Information was understandable</li> <li>○ Resources could be opened, downloaded and shared</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



## Findings

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### **Gaps and opportunities for sharing emergency communications with multicultural communities in regional Victoria**

Throughout research activities, participants identified gaps and opportunities for improving emergency communications with multicultural communities in regional Victoria. Participants highlighted the essential role of multicultural community organisations, leaders and volunteers in identifying and sharing emergency information with community members. These representatives had a strong understanding of community needs and were trusted by community members to share reliable information. Participants reported sharing information through multiple communication channels including conversations with individuals and families, WhatsApp, text, social media and through community and faith events.

*“I think communities are different. Some communities are more verbal. Other communities are visual or can read, trust easily a message from SMS, from emails, but other communities are not very strong in emails, SMS. They rely on message from mouth to mouth, from community leader, voice from community leader or voice from the pastor, something like that” (Respondent 4, Workshop 1)*

Participants reported that they used a range of methods to access emergency information to share with their communities. They reported receiving emails with resources from government departments and emergency service providers. They would also search online and attend regional meetings to learn information from emergency stakeholders and other local services. Although there were a range of platforms offering emergency preparedness resources, information was often available in English-only and was not always relevant for their regional area. Participants also reported delays in receiving translated information, leading to community leaders and volunteers translating and simplifying emergency information themselves.

*“So, shortly, we have a problem of communication. Communication, the message comes, but came to our community a little bit late. We need the information, but on time.” (Respondent 8, Workshop 1)*

Participants noted that translating and simplifying emergency information was often done with little or no resourcing. Filtering emergency information and determining whether a resource was relevant for their communities also increased their workload. Participants identified that a centralised platform where they could access relevant emergency information for regional multicultural communities would be a useful tool for the sector. They also highlighted the value of a space to share learnings from past emergencies to reduce duplication and inefficiency.

*“It seems there are many channels to get the information. It would be cool to have a central, one place, people only need to remember one place to get the information.” (Respondent 2, Workshop 1)*

Overall, participants emphasised the need for practical and accessible emergency preparedness information tailored to multicultural communities, particularly for newly arrived individuals who



may be unfamiliar with local systems. They highlighted the importance of providing information in easy-to-understand formats, including audio-visual materials, and content to accommodate diverse preferences and needs. In addition, participants wanted timely access to translated resources to ensure that all people could access information and take action to prepare for emergencies.

*“having a language neutral resource that could be animated, you know. It could be culturally appropriate and anyone who could, you know, watch that video or watch that infographic, they could understand exactly what that image is depicting” (Respondent 1, workshop 1)*

These insights were shared in team meetings with ECCV and Today Design. Potential outputs we discussed included audio-visual resources, programs to bring together multicultural communities and emergency service providers and an online platform to house multicultural emergency communication resources. Reflecting on the wider program of work, we prioritised the online platform because Burnet and ECCV were already developing audio-visual resources to support emergency preparedness and Neighbourhood Collective coordinated an existing program to bring together emergency service providers and community leaders. Additionally, in previous research, Burnet had partnered with Today Design to develop an online platform for multicultural community workers to share information, giving us a prototype to start with. Based on these discussions, the next phase of our work explored the potential of adapting and further developing an online platform for multicultural community organisations to connect and share emergency communication resources.

## **Perceptions of accessing and sharing emergency information through an online platform**

When we discussed the potential of an online resource hub to share translated emergency information with multicultural community workers, participants expressed diverse opinions. Some were supportive of the idea while others had concerns. To facilitate discussion, we showed participants an existing website where they could create an organisational profile and user log-ins, upload and access resources and communicate with other multicultural organisations.

Overall, participants identified that a website with emergency information would be accessible by multicultural workers but not community members, due to language and technology barriers. Multicultural community workers reported that they already used other online platforms to identify emergency information (e.g. the Vic Emergency app). Participants were concerned that a new website would be under-used and duplicate existing resources. They suggested having a clear purpose and highlighting why this platform was different to others in the sector. Participants also questioned specific features of the website. For example, having to create an organisational profile and user log-ins was seen as a burden that would increase their workload and would not be feasible over the long term. Additionally, participants reported they did not have the time or ongoing funding to develop and upload emergency resources to a website. Participants preferred to communicate with other multicultural organisations through meetings and direct conversations rather than through an online platform.

*“This is going to be additional work and extra time, especially if it’s to do with emergencies. I don’t know who’s going to do it. If we are going to add it to [detail removed] it has to come with some funding. Current funding doesn’t allow for us to do the job we are doing*



*currently, most work is voluntary hours, who is gonna do what? How much time is going to consume?” (Participant 1, Interviews)*

Despite these concerns, some participants supported the development of a platform where they could identify and access translated emergency communication resources. They also valued the potential to access resources relevant to their regional area and local communities and being able to learn from past emergency experiences. They perceived the website as potentially useful in planning for future emergencies.

*“For a person in the field, this could be like an archive when they are doing their planning. “*  
*(Participant 1, Interviews)*

Based on these learnings and ongoing discussions with ECCV, we adapted our project and focused on developing a multicultural emergency resource hub to share emergency preparedness and translated resources with multicultural community organisations and bicultural workers. To address concerns about added workload for regional ethnic councils, there was the potential for the website to be supported by ECCV as part of their core business. This could be implemented through incorporating the resource hub into ECCV’s existing website so that it was not a brand new website for people to access. It was clear from interviews that the resource hub should not require organisations to create a profile or user log-ins as this was seen as a barrier to adoption. These insights and suggestions were shared with Today Design and informed the creation of a new platform taken forward into the next stage of the research.

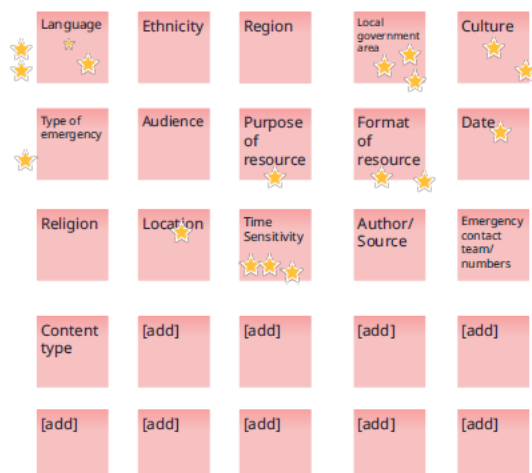
## **Priorities and preferences for resource hub features and functions**

Participants provided further suggestions for the features and functions that the website should include. Participants’ main priority was being able to access high-quality translated and plain language emergency resources in a timely manner. Specifically, participants needed to quickly identify resources that were relevant to their area and communities. A clear and well-structured website with a simple search function was seen as critical to enable efficient resource discovery. When we asked participants to create a search strategy, they commonly used words like ‘flood’, ‘prepare’, ‘language’ and ‘support’. Participants wanted to be able to search for and filter resources based on the type of emergency, the stage of emergency, geographic region, specific language and type of resource (image 1).



**What filters would you use to narrow your search? Add a star to three categories you would use.**

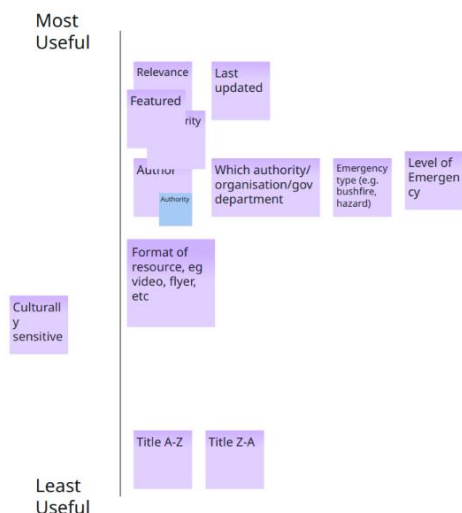
Please add missing categories



**Image 1.** Filters to narrow your search results

To sort search results, participants believed it was most important to include a ‘date’ or ‘last updated’ option to ensure they were accessing the most recent information (image 2). Having a section to feature recently updated resources on the home page was also seen as useful.

**Working together, order each category on the line below from most useful to least useful.**



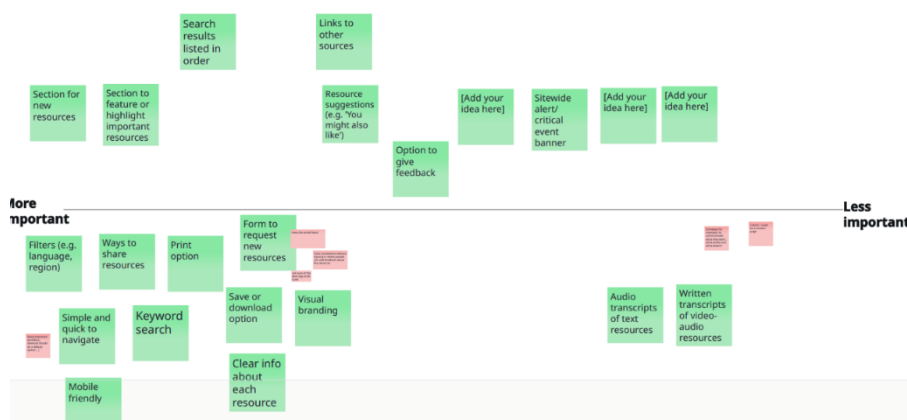
**Image 2:** Workshop activity where participants organised potential categories for filters from most useful to least useful.

When search results appeared, participants recommended including images and previews of resources to break up chunks of text. They suggested having short descriptive titles of resources as too much detail was considered time consuming and inaccessible. In the list of results, participants wanted to see specific information about the type of resource, languages and date.



Once participants had viewed their list of results and identified potentially relevant resources, they shared what kind of information they would like to see on the resource page. Participants indicated they would look for organisation names, logos and references to assess whether a resource was credible. They also wanted to know the date that the resource was last updated. To reduce the time burden on community organisations, participants suggested including a brief dot-point description of each resource (e.g. the key messages or summary of main points) to aid in distributing clear information to community members. Having options to share resources with community members was also rated as important. Specifically, participants wanted to be able to copy links that could be shared with community members through channels like WhatsApp and social media. Recognising that not all multicultural communities have access to technology meant that being able to download or print resources was also key for sharing directly with community members in person and through events. Finally, participants suggested including simple contact information (e.g. email, phone number) where they could report errors, suggest improvements, or request new resources based on emerging needs.

Now that we have gone through how you might find and use resources, we want you to tell us the features that would make this website most useful for you. Working together, order each feature on the line below from more important to less important. Please add anything we have missed!



**Image 3:** Workshop activity where participants organised potential features for the website from most important to least important.

During testing of the Minimum Viable Product (MVP), the initial draft of the online resource hub, participants were invited to provide detailed feedback on the platform's design and functionality. One participant emphasised the need for a dedicated section that explains the project in more depth, including the process for selecting and filtering resources. They suggested this could be included as a standalone section or as part of an FAQ that could also help community leaders understand how to use and share resources effectively within their networks.

Participants also highlighted the importance of offering a variety of resources to support more accurate filtering and tagging. This would help ensure that the keyword system remains scalable and reliable as the library expands, allowing users to consistently find the most relevant content. Additionally, for future versions, it was recommended to minimise the need to navigate to multiple external pages to gather information, streamlining the user experience.

*"I don't think there are enough information. I would want to know more about the project. E.g. how are the resources selected, who can send their resources, how the project came about (specific event that outlined issues). I would add how people can contribute either*



*recommending resources, sharing vital information with their community. There could be a couple of section. E.g. About, Background, how it works etc.” (Tester 6, Testing meeting)*

*“Filtering doesn’t feel very effective yet. However, as more resources are added, we’ll likely see a broader range of tags and more accurate filtering. It’s important to ensure that the keyword system scales well—so users can reliably find the most relevant content as the library grows.” (Tester 3, Testing meeting)*

## Design Output

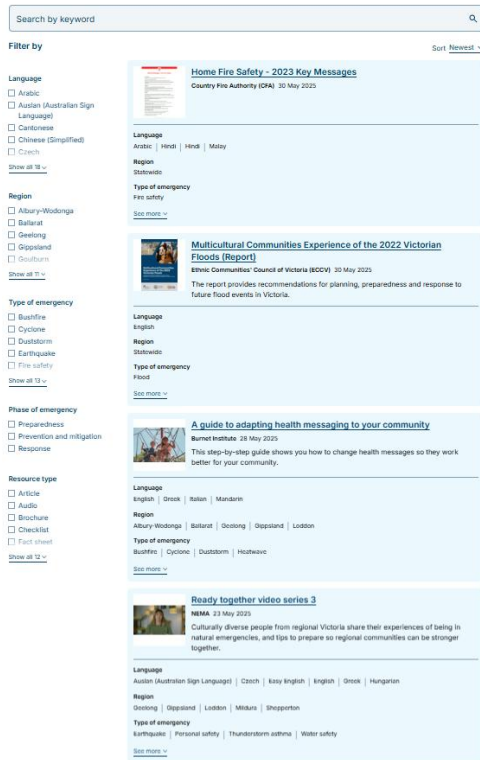
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Based on what we learnt during our research, we collaborated with Today Design and ECCV to build an online platform to share emergency communication resources with multicultural community organisations in regional Victoria. The website aims to provide access to information to assist multicultural organisations to prepare their communities for emergencies like fires, floods and storms.

In response to participant priorities, the Resource Hub has been embedded within the main ECCV website rather than launched as a standalone platform. This approach was intended to streamline access, reduce the need to visit a new website, and ensure the resource originates from a trusted and familiar source within the community. The Hub does not require active input or content management from community organisations, addressing concerns about capacity and workload. However, it does provide an accessible channel for users to offer feedback or request additional resources directly from ECCV. The Hub also incorporates several key features:

### **Simplified navigation bar**

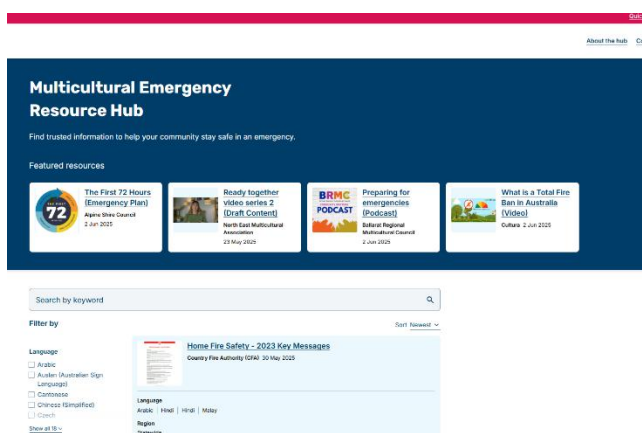
Designed to improve user experience, particularly for those accessing the platform with limited time and availability. It includes filter options that allow users to search resources by categories such as language (e.g., Arabic, Cantonese), region (e.g., Hume, Loddon), type of emergency (e.g., bushfires, floods), phase of emergency (e.g., preparedness, response), and resource type (e.g., report, video, infographic). Additional filter options can be added to each category by the managing organisation, currently ECCV. It also includes a Sort by function, allowing users to organise resources by title or publication date (See Image 4).



**Image 4:** Displays the simplified navigation landing page, including the search bar, category filters, and the resource list layout with the option to sort b.

## Featured resources

The platform contains a section for resources curated and highlighted by ECCV. These resources are displayed on the landing page to provide users with quick and direct access to key information without the need to search or apply filters. This feature allows to highlight high-priority or time-sensitive materials and make them readily visible to all users, including those with time pressure. (See Image 5).



**Image 5:** Showcases the featured resources section on the landing page, highlighting key materials selected by managing organisation.



## Key resource information

When search results appear, each resource has a brief summary and key information such as language, emergency type, and format, allowing users to quickly assess the relevance of the resource before opening it (see image 6).

**The First 72 Hours (Emergency Plan)**  
Alpine Shire Council | 02 Jun 2025  
Find a flyer, video and emergency plan template for you to be prepared for the first 72 hours of an emergency.

**Language**  
Easy English | English

**Region**  
Albury-Wodonga

**Type of emergency**  
Bushfire | Flood | Storms

[See more](#)

**Image 6** Example of an individual resource item from the search results list, highlighting key details such as the resource title, authoring organisation, publication date, language, and a brief description.

## Short summary of each resource

Once users select a resource, they can view a short summary, visual thumbnails, key details such as language, format, and emergency type, as well as indicators of multilingual availability. Each preview also includes a clear download or 'play video' button, making it easy for users to access and save resources directly (See image 7).

**Multicultural Communities Experience of the 2022 Victorian Floods (Report)**  
Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV) | 30 May 2025  
The report provides recommendations for planning, preparedness and response to future flood events in Victoria. (20 pages long)

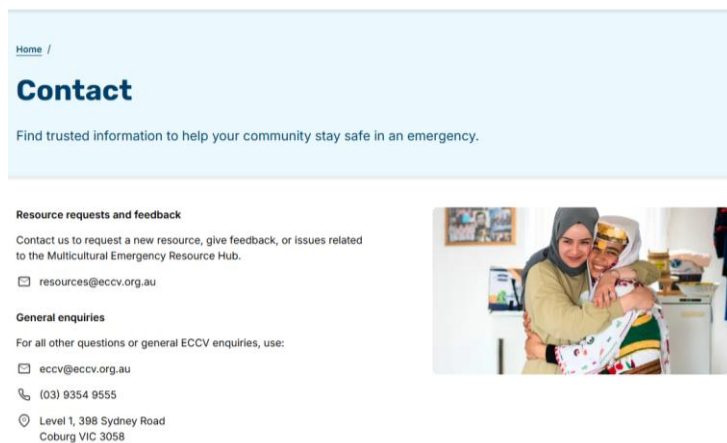
**Home Fire Safety - 2023 Key Messages**  
Country Fire Authority (CFA) | 30 May 2025  
Key messages about home fire safety that you can use for newsletters, social media posts and conversations with your community members.

**Image 7** resource examples with short summaries, showcasing key features to facilitate understanding of the resource.



## Contact information

The platform contains a contact information section and form, where users, particularly those working in the emergency and multicultural community sectors, can provide feedback, suggest new resources, or engage directly with ECCV. This feature supports ongoing collaboration and ensures the Hub remains current and responsive to community needs (see image 8).



**Image 8** Contact Information page, providing details for users to submit feedback, suggest resources, or make inquiries related to the Multicultural Emergency Resource Hub.

## Discussion

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### Summary

The Multicultural Emergency Resource Hub was co-developed with the Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV), Today Design, the Burnet Institute, and key stakeholders. The development process was informed by priorities identified during the research and planning phases, with a particular focus on usability, accessibility, and relevance for multicultural organisations engaged in emergency preparedness.

### Collaboration with established peak body

Working in partnership with ECCV, Victoria's peak body for migrant and refugee communities, enabled us to create a research project and outputs that complement emergency communication efforts from ethnic councils and other organisations in regional Victoria. This collaboration allows sustainability of the resource, as ECCV will manage the online resource hub and promote with their member organisations. Directly involving ECCV meant their staff and regional members were able to support and inform the project through recruiting participants via trusted networks, understanding gaps and priorities, sharing local and cultural knowledge and designing the look and use of the online resource hub.



This collaboration will continue beyond the life of the funded work as Burnet will support ECCV going forward with some funding contributions towards hosting costs of the platform and some researcher capacity to conduct web searches to locate resources which could be placed within the hub for users to access, growing the resource hub over time. Burnet and ECCV will meet regularly to discuss the effectiveness of the hub and explore opportunities to improve or grow the hub and associated work.

## **Sharing the resource**

We developed an online multicultural resource hub, embedded in ECCV's main website, for professionals working in the emergency response space with multicultural communities. The hub provides easy access to key information to help these professionals better prepare and support the communities they work closely with. Our results showed that professionals need simple and quick access to relevant information, filtered and managed by a funded organisation. Ethnic councils and other multicultural organisations often have limited and inconsistent budgets and usually lack the staff capacity to regularly update or select key resources.

ECCV will manage, monitor, and continuously update the online resource hub with information they consider essential for all emergency services, with assistance from Burnet going forward. The hub will include filtered resources and specific tags such as language and location, features that were identified as critical by ethnic councils and multicultural workers.

## **Expected impacts**

This online resource has the potential to reduce the workload of ethnic councils and multicultural organisations by filtering and sorting information that is relevant to their specific communities. It can also help increase awareness of the different needs and priorities across regions, and for various types of emergencies such as fires, floods, and storms.

Most importantly, the hub can support professionals working in the emergency response space by providing access to translated resources in multiple languages. It also allows for the possibility of requesting translations in specific languages, ensuring that communication with multicultural communities is both effective and inclusive.

## **Future opportunities**

Future opportunities from this research include a longer-term evaluation to understand the reach and impact of the online resource hub within the sector. This could involve monitoring website views and levels of engagement with the hub over time. There is also an opportunity to revisit and improve the design of the hub based on ongoing feedback and suggestions from professionals working in the emergency response space.

## **Strengths and Limitations**

Our project was strengthened by the involvement of people who are actively working with multicultural communities and who have a strong experience and passion for emergency preparedness and community work in regional areas. These individuals dedicated their time and shared their views and priorities with us. Additionally, the partnership with a peak body added



value by providing a structure that offer a potential for sustainability and reach of the online resource hub. The used of mixed approaches including online workshops, interviews, testing of the resource, and use of an existing pilot website reduced the duplication of efforts and accelerated the process and development of the resource. The project also faced several limitations, including staff changes, which affected continuity, and competing priorities that led to delays in delivery. Additionally, some participants expressed concern and frustration about over consultation, which may have impacted levels of trust and engagement.

Additional challenges have concerned the hosting and maintenance costs and capacity required to ensure the hub remains relevant going forward.

## **Conclusion**

This participatory research project strengthened our understanding of how to effectively share emergency information with professionals working in emergency preparedness with multicultural communities. Participants expressed a clear preference for easy access to resources based on location and language, ideally through a central hub, not a new website, where certified translations can be found. Collaborating with ECCV was essential to engage multicultural community workers and to co-develop a practical tool for sharing emergency preparedness resources that can be accessed and used more broadly and in a timely manner across the sector.



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